Since it seems as if the Bonderman-as-veteran-arm rumor seems to be gaining some steam, let's make our first foray into the Hot Stove because…well, if your driveway looks anything like mine, you could use a little heat. Regardless of the facts that it's February and that Pitchers and Catchers report in less than two weeks, this off-season has been so devoid of "news" or even "rumors" involving the Indians, let's take the opportunity to rationalize what Bonderman (if added) represents as a player and what he would mean to the 2011 Tribe.

Is this jumping into thing a bit, since there have only been reports that the Indians are interested in seeking deal with Bonderman?
Maybe, but since I don't know if I can write another comparison to teams of yesteryear or preach patience to see what these young players can do, let's take the opportunity to pull up a stool to the Hot Stove…even if everyone else in MLB deserted their spots around the fire a couple of weeks/months ago.

Regardless, regarding Bonderman, a friend of mine e-mailed me to say that "if Bonderman isn't the textbook Indians' signing, I don't know who is", adding a snarky comment about Josh Tomlin to boot. But Bonderman certainly does fit the Indians' profile of the past few years in terms of adding an undervalued veteran arm from the scrap heap and seeing if they can put some polish on someone else's refuse.

In particular, Bonderman's situation is interesting when you compare it to the last "bargain-bin" shopping purchase that the Indians found for their rotation, with some eerie similarities to Hot

Carl Pavano and the career arc for each. To start off this little comparison, realize that the ages are going to be different and the timeframes and leagues are not going to allow a true "apples-to-apples" look, but you'll see that Bonderman over the last 5 years and Pavano, from his time in Florida to Minnesota, actually represent some interesting comps, starting with Bonderman's best season…way back in 2006:

Jeremy Bonderman – 2006 (Age 23)

4.08 ERA (112 ERA+), 1.30 WHIP, 8.5 K/9, 2.7 BB/9, 3.16 K/BB in 214 IP over 34 games

After that 2006 season, the then-23-year-old Bonderman signed a 4-year deal with the Motor City Kitties that paid him $38M through the end of 2010. Prior to the 2007 season, Baseball Prospectus wrote that, "Bonderman is as good a bet as any pitcher in the American League to win a Cy Young Award, provided that Johan Santana gets hit by a bus or something." Seriously…

Carl Pavano – 2004 (Age 28)

3.00 ERA (137 ERA+), 1.17 WHIP, 5.6 K/9, 2.0 BB/9, 2.84 K/BB in 222 1/3 IP over 31 games

Certainly, Pavano's 2004 makes Bonderman's 2006 pale in comparison (and how crazy is it to see what Pavano did back in 2004), but just like Bonderman, Pavano parlayed this season into a 4-year deal with the Evil Empire worth $39.95M, nearly identical to the deal Bonderman signed after his 2006 season, with the $1.95M difference being the buy-out of Pavano's 2009 option.

We all know what happened in the Big Apple in the ensuing years with the "American Idle", so let's not re-hash that again. Just realize, for the purposes of attempting to find apples-too apples, Pavano missed the entire 2006 season with an injury, so his 4-year total is being used in comparison to Bonderman's 3-year total, a period during which Bonderman struggled to stay in the rotation consistently for the first 3 years of the deal, posting this line in that three-year stretch:

Jeremy Bonderman – 2007 to 2009

4.96 ERA (92 ERA+), 1.47 WHIP, 6.8 K/9, 3.2 BB/9, 2.11 K/BB in 256 IP over 48 games

In this timeframe, Bonderman battled multiple injuries, including a sore elbow that caused his disappointing 2007 and a very serious shoulder clot in 2008. Unquestionably ugly and a significant drop-off from his 2006, but compare those numbers to Pavano's as a Yankee:

Carl Pavano – 2005 to 2008

5.00 ERA (87 ERA+), 1.46 WHIP, 4.6 K/9, 1.9 BB/9, 2.5 K/BB in 145 2/3 IP over 26 games

After posting that three-year cumulative line, Pavano made his way out of New York and onto the North Coast, drawing howls of despair (from me, admittedly...among others) as nobody could figure out why the Indians were willing to guarantee THIS pitcher even $1.5M prior to the 2009 season.

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